

SDC ANALYSIS

AUSSOM AFTER KAMPALA

What Somalia Won, What Remains
Unresolved, and the Road Ahead



FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA
SOMALI DIPLOMACY CENTRE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The future of Somalia's security transition has entered a critical phase. The African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) is intended to support Somalia as responsibility for national security gradually shifts toward Somali institutions. Yet the transition is taking place at a time when the international support architecture that has sustained security operations in Somalia is itself under increasing pressure.

The United States' decision of 1 July 2026 not to support the continuation of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) beyond the current AUSSOM authorization creates a major challenge to the operational model behind the mission. The decision does not necessarily mean that AUSSOM itself must end. Rather, it raises a more fundamental question:

How can a mission continue to operate if the logistical system that enables it is removed?

This distinction is central to understanding the situation. AUSSOM is an African Union mission, with troops contributed by African states, but its ability to operate at scale has depended on a wider network of international financing, logistics and political support. UNSOS has provided critical functions including fuel, food, water, medical support, casualty evacuation, aviation, communications, engineering, accommodation and equipment-related support.

These are not merely administrative services. They are operational requirements for sustaining a force in Somalia's security environment.

The Kampala summit therefore took place at a particularly important moment. Somalia did not approach the transition by rejecting the eventual departure of AUSSOM. Its position was that the transition should be orderly, coordinated and phased, allowing sufficient time for Somali security forces to assume greater responsibility while avoiding a security vacuum. The resulting communiqué called for an 18–24 months period of continued support.

This was an important diplomatic outcome for Somalia. It created additional political space and reduced the risk of an abrupt disruption to the transition. Somalia also successfully objected to provisions concerning its internal political affairs, with two such provisions subsequently removed from the final communiqué.

But the diplomatic gain should not be confused with a resolution of the underlying problem.

Additional time does not automatically create additional capacity.

The Kampala outcome did not establish a fully funded 18–24 months transition package, nor did it guarantee a replacement for UNSOS. The deeper challenge therefore remains unresolved:

Who will finance and operationally sustain the transition, and will Somali security forces be ready to assume the full burden when the additional period ends?

The scale of this dependency is significant. The proposed UNSOS budget for 2025–26 was approximately **US\$537.2 million**, compared with an AUSSOM budget estimated at roughly **US\$166–190 million**. AUSSOM has an authorized strength of **11,826 personnel** drawn from six troop-contributing countries. The figures illustrate that the mission's operational sustainability cannot be considered separately from the wider logistics system supporting it.

The problem also predates Kampala. The international financing architecture had been under strain for some time, including difficulties surrounding predictable financing, outstanding obligations and the future of UNSOS. The U.S. decision therefore exposed an existing structural weakness rather than creating the entire problem itself.

SDC's assessment is consequently straightforward but deliberately nuanced:

Kampala was a diplomatic success for Somalia, but it was not yet a strategic solution.

Somalia gained time. It gained diplomatic space. It helped protect the transition from an immediate disruption. But the fundamental question remains how Somalia moves from an internationally supported security system toward a genuinely sustainable Somali-led one.

SDC therefore argues for a **Negotiated Transition Compact** rather than either an indefinite extension of the existing model or an accelerated withdrawal unsupported by adequate Somali capacity.

Such an arrangement should be:

- **time-bound**, with a clearly defined endpoint;
- **linked to measurable Somali security and institutional benchmarks;**
- accompanied by protection of essential logistics, particularly casualty evacuation and other life-saving capabilities;
- supported by stronger federal-state security coordination;
- based on transparent assessments of Somali force readiness;
- accompanied by stronger financial and logistical accountability; and

- structured around a clear division of responsibilities between AUSSOM and Somali security institutions.

The central objective should not be to preserve international support indefinitely. Nor should it be to withdraw international support before Somalia is capable of replacing the functions being withdrawn.

The objective should be to use the remaining transition period to make the eventual transfer of responsibility real and sustainable.

Kampala has therefore bought Somalia something valuable:

Time.

The question now is whether that time will be converted into **capacity**.

When AUSSOM eventually leaves, the most important question will no longer be who replaces it.

It will be:

Will Somalia be ready to replace the system itself?

That is the real test of Kampala.

1. INTRODUCTION — THE KAMPALA QUESTION

Somalia's security transition has reached a decisive stage.

For years, African forces have operated in Somalia alongside Somali security forces in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Today, that African-led presence is represented by the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). Its long-term purpose has never been to remain in Somalia indefinitely. The underlying objective has been to help Somalia develop the capacity to assume responsibility for its own security.

The difficulty is that transferring responsibility for security is not as simple as transferring troops from one institution to another. A functioning security operation depends on a wider system of logistics, financing, transportation, medical support, communications and other operational capabilities. Much of this support has historically depended on an international architecture involving the United Nations and international donors.

AUSSOM may be African-led, but the system that enables it to operate has never been purely African.

That system is now under pressure.

The United States announced that it would no longer support the continuation of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) after 2026. Washington's position was linked to the view that Somalia, after years of international assistance, should assume greater responsibility for its own security. At the same time, the U.S. decision should not be interpreted simply as an abandonment of Somalia. Washington continues to have security interests in Somalia and remains involved in counterterrorism cooperation. The change is more specifically about the future of one important mechanism through which Somalia's wider security architecture has been supported.

That distinction matters because AUSSOM is an African Union mission. Its troops are provided by African countries, meaning that any major change to the support architecture directly affects the countries carrying the mission as well as Somalia itself.

It was against this backdrop that Somalia and the countries contributing troops to AUSSOM gathered in Kampala, Uganda, at the end of July 2026. The summit brought together Somalia, the troop-contributing countries, the African Union, the United Nations and regional partners at a moment when the mission itself remained operational but the wider system supporting it was becoming increasingly uncertain.

The official summit process reflects the breadth of the challenge. Before the Heads of State and Government meeting on 31 July, Chiefs of Defence Forces considered the preparedness of Somali security forces, force generation and integration, AUSSOM deployment, air assets and capabilities. They also considered strategic options for the future of the AU presence in Somalia in the absence of UNSOS and discussed AUSSOM's resource mobilisation and financing strategy.

Kampala was therefore not simply a meeting about whether AUSSOM would continue.

It was a meeting about how Somalia moves from an internationally supported security system toward one that Somalia can eventually sustain itself.

That is the central question of this paper.

It leads to two others:

What did Somalia actually achieve in Kampala?

And, more importantly:

Did the summit solve the underlying problem, or did it simply give Somalia more time to solve it?

The distinction between those two questions is critical to understanding what Kampala actually delivered.

2. WHAT WAS AT STAKE?

To understand what Somalia was trying to achieve in Kampala, it is important to first understand what was actually supporting the security mission on the ground.

For years, African forces have operated in Somalia alongside Somali security forces in the fight against Al-Shabaab. The mission has evolved over time, from AMISOM to ATMIS and now AUSSOM. Its long-term purpose has remained broadly consistent: to help create the conditions in which Somalia can eventually assume full responsibility for its own security.

But there is a part of that transition that is easy to overlook.

An army does not operate on soldiers and weapons alone.

It needs fuel.

It needs food and water.

It needs transportation.

It needs medical support.

It needs communications.

It needs aviation.

And behind all of this is a logistical system capable of moving people, supplies and equipment across a country where security conditions remain difficult.

That system has been a critical part of the international security architecture in Somalia. Although AUSSOM is an African Union mission, its ability to operate at scale has depended heavily on support provided through the United Nations and financed through international contributions.

This is why the question surrounding AUSSOM is larger than the number of troops deployed.

The mission can have a mandate.

It can have soldiers.

It can have military objectives.

But without the systems that allow those soldiers to remain supplied, transported, medically supported and operational, the mandate becomes increasingly difficult to implement.

The System Behind the Mission

The United Nations Support Office in Somalia, UNSOS, has played a particularly important role in this architecture.

Its responsibilities have included:

- fuel, rations and water;
- casualty evacuation and medical evacuation;
- medical services;
- aviation support and strategic air mobility;
- communications;
- engineering;
- accommodation; and
- support related to contingent-owned equipment.

These functions may sound technical, but they are operationally decisive.

Fuel determines whether vehicles and aircraft can move. Food and water determine whether troops can remain deployed. Medical and casualty evacuation determine whether wounded personnel can be extracted and treated. Aviation and transport determine whether forces and supplies can reach areas where they are needed. Communications allow forces and command structures to remain connected.

In other words, logistics is not something that happens around the mission. It is part of what makes the mission possible.

The scale of this support illustrates the depth of the dependency. The proposed UNSOS budget for the 2025–26 financial period was approximately **US\$537.2 million**, while the annual AUSSOM budget has been estimated at roughly **US\$166.5–190 million**. UNSOS therefore represents a support platform roughly three times the size of the AU mission budget it helps enable. AUSSOM itself has an authorized strength of **11,826 personnel**, drawn from six troop-contributing countries.

That financial asymmetry matters.

AUSSOM has largely depended on voluntary financing and has faced chronic funding shortages, while the UN logistics pillar historically benefited from a more predictable financing structure. The result is a system in which the operational sustainability of an African-led mission has depended substantially on infrastructure and financing controlled outside the African Union itself.

It Is Not Only AUSSOM That Depends on the System

There is another dimension that makes the situation even more important for Somalia.

UNSOS has also provided non-lethal logistical support to Somali National Army and Somali Police Force personnel participating in joint operations. That support has been delivered through UNSOS infrastructure and financed through the voluntary Somali Security Forces Trust Fund.

The authorized ceiling for Somali security personnel under this arrangement has been up to **20,900**, although approximately **17,400** were actually being supported until recently. The support pipeline was disrupted after the trust fund became empty, with regular supply deliveries to Somali forces halted in December 2025 before rations were more recently resumed.

This creates an important distinction.

The question is not simply:

What happens to AUSSOM if UNSOS disappears?

It is also:

What happens to the Somali forces that have depended on the same logistical infrastructure?

That makes the issue directly relevant to Somalia's transition toward security ownership.

The Four Pillars Behind the Mission

The deeper structure becomes clearer when the wider security architecture is considered.

AUSSOM has effectively been built on several separately owned pillars:

Troops

African countries provide the personnel.

Logistics

The United Nations has provided critical operational support through UNSOS.

Stipends

International partners, particularly the European Union, have provided major financial support for troop allowances.

Enablers

Bilateral partners have provided training, equipment and other forms of security assistance.

Each pillar performs a different function.

That means the removal or weakening of one pillar cannot automatically be solved by simply asking another actor to do more.

This is the central vulnerability that Kampala had to confront.

The question was therefore never simply whether AUSSOM should continue.

The more difficult question was:

Could the system that sustains AUSSOM continue to function during Somalia's transition toward full security responsibility?

That is what was really at stake.

And this is what makes the U.S. decision so consequential.

3. THE U.S. CHANGES THE EQUATION

The situation surrounding AUSSOM changed significantly when the United States announced that it would no longer support the continuation of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) beyond 2026.

The decision was presented within a broader argument about responsibility. After years of international assistance, Washington increasingly expected Somalia to assume greater responsibility for financing and sustaining its own security institutions.

But an important distinction must be made.

The United States' decision concerning UNSOS is not the same thing as a decision to abandon Somalia.

The United States continues to have significant security interests in Somalia, particularly in relation to counterterrorism and the threat posed by Al-Shabaab. U.S. security cooperation

with Somalia therefore remains broader than its contribution to the UN logistics mechanism. The immediate concern is instead the loss of an important operational support mechanism.

That distinction matters because UNSOS has not simply been another donor to AUSSOM. It has provided the practical infrastructure through which troops can remain operational. Removing that support therefore raises questions about fuel, food, transportation, medical evacuation, aviation, communications and other functions that cannot simply disappear without affecting operations.

A Decision with Wider Consequences

The implications extend beyond the United States and Somalia.

AUSSOM is an African Union mission. Its troops are provided by African countries, including the states that contribute personnel directly to operations in Somalia.

Those countries therefore face a practical question of their own:

Can they continue deploying and sustaining their forces if the international support architecture becomes less predictable?

The issue is particularly sensitive because troop-contributing countries have already operated within a difficult financing environment. AUSSOM has faced significant funding gaps, while its predecessor arrangements left substantial financial obligations unresolved.

The U.S. decision therefore did not create the structural weakness in the system.

It exposed it.

The deeper problem had been developing for years. International financing for African-led security operations had become increasingly uncertain. The European Union's long-standing role in financing troop allowances had weakened, AUSSOM inherited outstanding obligations from ATMIS, and efforts to establish a more predictable financing mechanism had not produced the level of certainty required to sustain the mission.

The United States' withdrawal from the UNSOS financing arrangement consequently became a critical turning point because it affected one of the central pillars supporting the existing model.

Why Somalia Could Not Simply Accept an Abrupt Change

From Somalia's perspective, the problem was not necessarily the principle of eventual international withdrawal.

Somalia itself has a clear long-term interest in assuming responsibility for its national security.

The concern was **timing and sequencing**.

If international support is reduced faster than Somali institutions can develop the capacity to replace it, the transition can create a gap between responsibility and capability. That gap is particularly dangerous in an environment where Al-Shabaab remains an active threat.

For Somalia, therefore, the objective was to ensure that the transition did not become an abrupt transfer of responsibility without the resources and capabilities required to carry it out.

This is why the debate surrounding UNSOS became inseparable from the broader question of Somali security ownership.

The real issue was no longer simply:

When will international forces leave?

It became:

What must be in place before they leave?

And that question ultimately brought Somalia, the African Union, troop-contributing countries and international partners to Kampala.

A Critical Distinction

It is tempting to describe the developments simply as the United States withdrawing its support and Somalia resisting.

That would be too simplistic.

The positions were not fundamentally divided over whether Somalia should eventually take responsibility for its security. There was greater agreement on the destination than on the road to reach it.

The disagreement concerned whether the existing support architecture could be reduced before Somalia had developed sufficient capacity to replace the functions being withdrawn.

That distinction becomes essential when assessing the Kampala summit.

Because Kampala was not primarily about choosing between international dependence and Somali ownership.

It was about determining how to move from one to the other without creating a dangerous security vacuum.

4. WHY KAMPALA?

By the end of July 2026, the question surrounding AUSSOM could no longer be treated as a distant issue.

The mission was still operating. Somali security forces were continuing to assume greater responsibilities. African troop-contributing countries remained committed to the mission. But the future of the logistical system supporting AUSSOM had become increasingly uncertain.

That is what made Kampala important.

On 31 July 2026, the second extraordinary summit of the troop-contributing countries to AUSSOM, together with the Federal Government of Somalia, was held at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala, Uganda. The summit was convened by Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and brought together the leadership of Somalia and the countries contributing troops to AUSSOM, alongside senior representatives of the African Union, IGAD and the United Nations.

But the summit was not an isolated meeting.

It came after several days of technical and political discussions designed to determine what could realistically happen next.

Before the Heads of State Meeting

On 29 July, the Chiefs of Defence Forces examined the preparedness of Somali security forces and progress in force generation and integration. They also considered AUSSOM's deployment, air assets and capabilities.

The discussions also looked directly at the consequences of a possible end to UNSOS support.

The Chiefs of Defence Forces considered strategic options for the future of the African Union's presence in Somalia in the absence of UNSOS. They also discussed AUSSOM's resource mobilisation and financing strategy.

The following day, the Chiefs of Defence Forces' report was presented to the Ministers of Defence for consideration. The summit subsequently received the report of the Defence Ministers before the Heads of State and Government meeting.

This sequence matters.

It shows that Kampala was not simply a political gathering where leaders arrived and discussed the future of AUSSOM in broad terms. There had already been discussions about the readiness

of Somali forces, the operational capabilities of AUSSOM, the future of the AU presence without UNSOS, and how the mission could be financed.

The summit was therefore confronting both sides of the transition:

Could Somali forces assume more responsibility?

And:

Could the international and regional system continue supporting them while that responsibility was transferred?

A Meeting About the Transition

The central issue was not whether Somalia should eventually take responsibility for its own security.

That objective was broadly understood.

The difficulty was how to get there without creating a dangerous gap between the responsibilities being transferred and the capabilities available to carry them.

The official communiqué captured this tension by calling for an orderly, coordinated and phased exit of AUSSOM, while also emphasizing the need for an integrated mission-support capability mandated by the UN Security Council to continue providing uninterrupted support for 18 to 24 months. The stated purpose was to allow agreed milestones to be implemented, strengthen Somali security institutions and facilitate the orderly transfer of security responsibilities.

This is the heart of the Kampala question.

AUSSOM was not being presented as a permanent security arrangement. Nor was the transition being treated as something that could happen simply because a date had been established.

The transition needed conditions.

Somali institutions needed greater capacity.

The mission needed operational support.

The financing system needed to sustain the process long enough for the transfer to become meaningful.

The summit therefore became a test of whether the different actors involved could agree not only on the destination, but on the practical arrangements required to reach it.

And that brings us to Somalia's position.

Because Mogadishu was not asking for AUSSOM to remain indefinitely.

It was asking for the transition to happen on terms that Somalia could realistically sustain.

5. WHAT DID SOMALIA WANT?

Somalia's position in Kampala needs to be understood carefully.

The Federal Government of Somalia was not arguing that AUSSOM should remain in Somalia indefinitely. The broader objective remained the eventual transfer of security responsibility to Somali institutions.

The disagreement was about **how that transfer should happen.**

For Somalia, the transition needed to be orderly, coordinated and phased. Somali security forces needed sufficient time to strengthen their capabilities, while international and regional support remained available during the period in which responsibility was being transferred.

This distinction is important because it changes how Somalia's position should be interpreted.

It was not simply a request for more foreign troops.

It was a request for more time to make Somali security ownership workable.

The Concern Over an Abrupt Transition

An accelerated withdrawal could create a dangerous gap if Somali forces were asked to assume responsibilities faster than their capabilities could develop. That concern was particularly relevant given the continuing threat posed by Al-Shabaab and the dependence of both AUSSOM and Somali security forces on external logistical and financial support.

Somalia therefore sought a transition in which the international community would continue providing essential support while Somali institutions strengthened their ability to take over.

The objective was ultimately to reach a point where Somalia could sustain its own security architecture rather than repeatedly extending an externally supported arrangement.

What Kampala Delivered

The Kampala communiqué reflected this position.

It called for an orderly, coordinated and phased exit of AUSSOM and for continued support for a period of 18 to 24 months. The purpose of that period was to provide time for agreed

milestones to be implemented, Somali security institutions to be strengthened and security responsibilities to be transferred in an orderly manner.

This was significant for Somalia. The additional period reduced the immediate risk of an abrupt disruption and created political space for the country to strengthen its security institutions.

But there is an important qualification.

An additional 18–24 months is a transition window, not a guarantee of success.

The period only becomes valuable if it is used to address the underlying weaknesses that made continued international support necessary in the first place.

That includes:

- Somali force readiness
- financing
- logistics
- command and coordination
- federal-state security cooperation
- sustainable national security planning

The summit therefore gave Somalia something important, but temporary:

Time.

The real question is what Somalia does with that time.

And this is where the distinction between a **diplomatic outcome** and a **strategic solution** begins to emerge.

6. TIME IS NOT THE SAME AS A SOLUTION

The 18–24 months period agreed in Kampala is important. But its value depends entirely on what happens during that period.

Additional time can create an opportunity for Somalia to strengthen its security institutions and prepare for the eventual transfer of responsibilities. It cannot, by itself, solve the structural problems that have made international support necessary.

This is the central distinction:

Time creates an opportunity for transition. It does not create the capacity to sustain it.

What Does 18–24 Months Actually Require?

A functioning transition requires more than maintaining the number of troops on the ground. It requires the ability to sustain those forces and increasingly replace the functions that international partners currently provide.

That means addressing three fundamental requirements:

Troops

Somali security institutions need sufficient personnel, appropriate deployment and the operational capability to assume responsibilities being transferred from AUSSOM.

Logistics

Those forces need fuel, food, water, transportation, communications, medical support, casualty evacuation and other essential operational services.

Money

The institutions responsible for providing those capabilities need predictable and sustainable financing.

Without all three, a transition timetable can exist on paper without being sustainable in practice.

The Financing Problem

The scale of the challenge becomes clearer when the budgets supporting the system are considered.

The proposed UNSOS budget for the 2025–26 financial period was approximately **US\$537.2 million**, while AUSSOM's annual budget has been estimated at roughly **US\$166.5–190 million**. AUSSOM is authorized to have **11,826 personnel**, drawn from six troop-contributing countries.

The comparison is revealing.

The logistical system supporting the mission has required resources substantially larger than the mission's own annual budget.

That does not mean that replacing UNSOS would simply require Somalia or the African Union to find an equivalent amount of money. The two budgets cover different functions. It does, however, demonstrate the scale of the support architecture that has existed behind AUSSOM.

Removing one part of that architecture without replacing the functions it performs would create an operational gap.

The Funding Gap Is Not New

The financing problem also did not begin with the U.S. decision concerning UNSOS.

AUSSOM has faced chronic funding difficulties, while the transition from previous missions left significant financial obligations unresolved. The mission inherited approximately **US\$93.9 million in unpaid obligations from ATMIS**, while its broader annual financing requirements have continued to exceed confirmed contributions.

The wider financing model has also become less predictable over time. The European Union, which historically played a major role in financing troop allowances, reduced its support over the years, while the transition to a more predictable international financing mechanism has not produced the level of certainty required to guarantee long-term sustainability.

This matters because it changes how the current crisis should be understood.

The U.S. decision did not create the financing problem. It exposed how dependent the existing system had become on a small number of external pillars.

The Cost of Postponing the Problem

There is also a danger in treating the 18–24 months simply as additional time before the same decision has to be made again.

If the underlying problems remain unresolved, the end of the transition period could produce the same questions that Kampala was intended to address:

- Who finances the security system?
- Who provides logistics?
- Who sustains the forces?
- Who provides medical evacuation and other critical enablers?
- Can Somali institutions carry the full responsibility?
- What happens if they cannot?

In that scenario, the transition would not have solved the dependency.

It would merely have postponed the moment when the dependency becomes impossible to ignore.

That is why the 18–24 months period should be treated not as a waiting period, but as a **capacity-building window**.

The objective should be to make measurable progress toward the point at which Somalia can assume the responsibilities currently carried by the international support architecture.

And that brings the discussion to the diplomatic events in Kampala itself, because while the summit was negotiating the future of AUSSOM, Somalia was also defending another important interest.

7. THE COMMUNIQUÉ MOMENT

The Kampala summit was not concerned only with the future of AUSSOM and the security transition. It also became a moment in which Somalia's position on its own internal political affairs was tested.

This issue emerged during the process of finalizing the summit communiqué.

Somalia objected to provisions that it considered inappropriate because they addressed matters relating to Somalia's internal political process. The objection was not directed at AUSSOM itself, nor at the broader objective of continuing the fight against Al-Shabaab and supporting Somalia's security transition.

The disagreement was specifically about the inclusion of language concerning Somalia's internal political affairs in a document addressing the regional security situation.

The issue became significant because it demonstrated that the Kampala discussions were not purely about operational arrangements. They also involved questions of sovereignty, political ownership and the appropriate boundaries of external involvement in Somalia's domestic affairs.

Somalia's Objection

During the communiqué process, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud raised objections to the disputed provisions.

Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni subsequently directed that the provisions be revised.

As a result, two provisions concerning Somalia's internal political process were removed from the final communiqué.

This was an important diplomatic development.

The significance was not simply that two paragraphs were removed. It demonstrated that Somalia's objection was able to influence the final outcome of a document agreed among regional and international actors.

For Somalia, that mattered because the country was simultaneously seeking international and regional support for its security transition while maintaining its authority over its own domestic political affairs.

Why This Matters

The episode illustrates a broader principle that runs through Somalia's engagement with international partners:

International security assistance does not remove national political ownership.

Somalia requires international support because the country's security transition remains dependent on capabilities and resources that cannot yet be fully provided domestically.

But accepting security assistance does not mean that every aspect of Somalia's internal political affairs should become subject to external direction.

The Kampala episode therefore deserves attention alongside the security and financing discussions.

It showed that Somalia was negotiating on two interconnected but distinct fronts:

1. Security

Securing the time and support required for an orderly transition away from AUSSOM.

2. Political Ownership

Protecting Somalia's authority over matters concerning its internal political process.

The outcome on both fronts was meaningful, but neither issue was completely resolved by the summit.

On security, Somalia gained an additional **18–24 months transition window**.

On the political question, Somalia succeeded in having the disputed provisions removed from the final communiqué.

But the larger strategic challenges remained.

The financing of the transition was still unresolved.

The future of the logistics architecture remained uncertain.

And the question of whether Somali institutions could assume the full security burden remained unanswered.

That is why the Kampala outcome needs to be assessed carefully.

It produced tangible diplomatic gains for Somalia, but those gains should not be confused with a complete strategic settlement.

The next question, therefore, is straightforward:

Did Somalia actually win in Kampala?

To answer that, we need to separate what Somalia achieved from what remained unresolved.

8. DID SOMALIA WIN?

The Kampala summit produced meaningful gains for Somalia. But describing the outcome simply as a victory would overlook the problems that remained unresolved.

The more accurate assessment is that **Somalia achieved important diplomatic objectives, while the central strategic challenge remained unresolved.**

What Somalia Achieved

1. Additional Time for the Security Transition

First, Somalia secured additional time for the security transition.

The Kampala communiqué called for an orderly, coordinated and phased exit of AUSSOM, alongside continued support for a period of **18–24 months**. This created additional space for Somali security institutions to strengthen their capabilities and for the transfer of responsibilities to take place without an abrupt disruption.

2. Protection of Political Ownership

Second, Somalia succeeded in protecting its position concerning its internal political affairs.

During the communiqué process, Somalia objected to provisions addressing its internal political process. Following the objection, two such provisions were removed from the final document. This demonstrated that Somalia was able to assert its position within the regional diplomatic process and influence the final outcome.

3. A Coordinated Regional Framework

Third, the summit kept the transition itself within a coordinated regional framework.

Rather than allowing the future of AUSSOM to be determined through an isolated decision by one actor, the Kampala process brought together Somalia, troop-contributing countries and the wider regional and international actors involved in supporting the mission.

These were real gains.

They mattered because an abrupt change to the security arrangement could have created significant operational and political risks.

What Somalia Did Not Achieve

The summit, however, did not resolve the fundamental financing problem.

The agreement to maintain support for another 18–24 months did not itself establish a fully funded package capable of guaranteeing that period.

Nor did Kampala provide a definitive replacement for the logistical functions historically performed through UNSOS.

This distinction is critical.

An agreement to continue the transition is not the same thing as an agreement on how the transition will be financed and sustained.

The underlying questions therefore remain:

- Who will finance the transition?
- Who will provide the logistics required to sustain the forces?
- How will critical capabilities such as medical evacuation and aviation support be maintained?
- What responsibilities will gradually move to Somali institutions?
- What happens if Somali capacity does not develop at the required pace?

These questions were not eliminated by the Kampala agreement.

They were given a larger window in which to be answered.

A Diplomatic Success, Not Yet a Strategic Solution

This leads to SDC's assessment.

Kampala was a diplomatic success for Somalia, but it was not yet a strategic solution.

Somalia gained time.

It gained political space.

It helped protect the transition from an immediate disruption.

But the fundamental challenge remains the same:

How does Somalia move from an internationally supported security system to a genuinely sustainable Somali-led security system?

That is the question that will ultimately determine whether Kampala was successful.

If the additional period is used to strengthen Somali institutions, establish sustainable financing, build reliable logistics and create clear benchmarks for transferring responsibility, Kampala may prove to have been a crucial turning point.

If the period simply postpones the same unresolved questions, the underlying dependency will remain.

The difference between those two outcomes will not be determined by the communiqué itself.

It will be determined by what happens during the time the communiqué created.

And to understand why this is so difficult, we need to look more closely at the system behind AUSSOM and the different actors whose contributions make the mission possible.

9. THE ARCHITECTURE SUPPORTING AUSSOM

AUSSOM does not operate as a standalone institution.

Its effectiveness depends on several different actors performing different functions. Understanding this architecture is essential because the current transition is not simply a question of replacing one military force with another. It is a question of rebuilding an entire security-support system around Somali institutions.

At its simplest, the architecture can be understood through **four interconnected pillars**.

1. African Troops

The personnel deployed under AUSSOM come from African troop-contributing countries. These countries provide the military forces that conduct operations alongside Somali security forces and support the broader effort against Al-Shabaab.

The mission therefore depends directly on the continued willingness and ability of these countries to deploy and sustain their personnel.

But providing troops is only one part of the equation.

A deployed force still requires the resources and infrastructure necessary to remain operational.

2. United Nations Logistics

This is where UNSOS has played a critical role.

The UN support structure has provided functions including fuel, rations, water, medical services, casualty evacuation, aviation, communications, engineering and other operational support.

These functions are easy to overlook because they are less visible than troops conducting operations.

Yet they are fundamental.

A military force can be deployed on paper, but without the logistics supporting it, its ability to operate effectively is severely constrained.

This is why the future of UNSOS has become such an important part of the AUSSOM transition.

3. International Financing

AUSSOM has also depended on international financial support.

The financing environment has historically involved major contributions from international partners, including the European Union's support for troop allowances. At the same time, the mission has experienced persistent funding shortages and inherited significant outstanding obligations from previous arrangements.

This creates another dependency.

Even where African countries provide the personnel, the financial resources required to sustain those personnel may come largely from outside Africa.

The result is an African-led operation with a financing structure that remains heavily dependent on international partners.

4. Bilateral Security Assistance

The fourth pillar consists of bilateral support from international partners.

This includes areas such as training, equipment and other forms of assistance to Somali security institutions.

Such assistance has contributed to Somalia's efforts to build the capacity required to eventually assume greater responsibility for national security.

This pillar is particularly important because the ultimate objective is not simply to sustain AUSSOM.

It is to strengthen Somali security institutions capable of operating without the same level of external dependence.

The Dependency Between the Pillars

The four pillars are interconnected.

African troops require logistics.

Logistics require financing.

Somali forces require training and equipment.

And all of these require some form of institutional and financial sustainability.

This means that removing one element can affect the entire system.

For example, if UNSOS support is reduced without a replacement mechanism, the consequences do not remain confined to the UN. They can affect AUSSOM's ability to sustain its troops. That can affect troop-contributing countries, the tempo of operations and ultimately the pace at which security responsibilities can safely be transferred to Somali forces.

This is why the transition needs to be viewed as a system, rather than as a sequence of separate decisions.

The Real Transition

The ultimate objective should therefore not be to replace AUSSOM with Somali forces overnight.

The objective is to **progressively transfer the capabilities behind the mission.**

Somalia needs to move toward a position where it can increasingly provide:

- its own security personnel;
- its own logistics;
- sustainable financing;
- command and coordination;
- essential operational enablers; and

- the institutions required to manage the entire security system.

That is a much larger task than simply increasing the number of Somali troops.

And it explains why the transition cannot be measured only by the date on which AUSSOM eventually leaves.

The real measure of success is whether Somalia can sustain the responsibilities that are transferred to it.

This brings us to perhaps the most important question in the entire transition:

What exactly must Somalia build before the international support architecture can be safely reduced?

10. WHAT SOMALIA MUST BUILD BEFORE THE EXIT

The 18–24 months transition period should not be treated simply as additional time before AUSSOM leaves.

It should be treated as a period in which Somalia must build the capabilities required to sustain the responsibilities that will be transferred to it.

The central question is therefore not how long AUSSOM stays, but:

What is Somalia capable of doing when AUSSOM leaves?

1. Security Force Readiness

The first requirement is the continued development of capable Somali security forces.

This means more than increasing personnel numbers. Somali forces must be sufficiently trained, organized, equipped and deployed to assume responsibilities currently performed with the support of AUSSOM.

The transition should therefore be measured against **capabilities and agreed milestones**, rather than simply a calendar date.

This is consistent with the Kampala approach, which linked the phased exit of AUSSOM to the strengthening of Somali security institutions and the implementation of agreed transition milestones.

2. Sustainable Logistics

The second requirement is the ability to sustain forces once external logistical support is reduced.

This is perhaps the most underestimated part of the transition.

Somalia will need systems capable of supporting:

- fuel and transportation;
- food and water;
- medical services;
- casualty evacuation;
- communications;
- engineering;
- aviation and other operational enablers.

These are precisely the types of functions that have historically been supported through UNSOS.

If Somalia develops larger forces without developing the logistics required to sustain them, the size of the force will not necessarily translate into greater operational capability.

3. Predictable Financing

The third requirement is sustainable financing.

Security institutions cannot be built around emergency funding cycles.

Somalia needs a clearer and more predictable framework for financing its security institutions and the responsibilities being transferred from international partners.

This is particularly important because AUSSOM itself has faced significant financing challenges, while the wider international financing model has become less predictable.

The transition period therefore needs to be used to answer a basic question:

What will finance Somalia's security system after the external support architecture is reduced?

Without a credible answer, the transition remains vulnerable.

4. Institutional Coordination

Security responsibility cannot be transferred effectively without strong coordination among Somalia's institutions.

The transition involves military forces, police, federal institutions, regional authorities and international partners.

Clear responsibilities and coordination mechanisms are therefore necessary to prevent gaps, duplication and uncertainty as responsibilities move from AUSSOM to Somali institutions.

The objective should be a security system that is increasingly **Somali-led, nationally coordinated and institutionally sustainable**.

5. A Measurable Transition Framework

Finally, the transition needs measurable benchmarks.

AUSSOM should not leave simply because a predetermined date has arrived. Equally, the transition should not become an open-ended justification for indefinite external support.

The stronger approach is to connect the transition timetable to clearly defined milestones.

These could include progress in:

- Somali force readiness;
- territorial and operational responsibility;
- logistics capacity;
- financing;
- command and coordination;
- institutional capability.

The Kampala communiqué's emphasis on agreed milestones and an orderly transfer of security responsibilities provides the basis for this approach.

The Real Test

These requirements point to a broader conclusion.

Somalia's security transition should not be judged by whether it can maintain the existing system for another 18–24 months.

It should be judged by whether, at the end of that period, Somalia is **materially more capable of sustaining its own security than it was at the beginning.**

That is the difference between managing a transition and building security ownership.

Kampala created the time.

The responsibility now is to turn that time into capability.

11. THE FINANCING QUESTION

If the security transition is ultimately about Somalia assuming greater responsibility, then financing is one of the most important questions that must be answered.

A security institution cannot become sustainable simply because responsibility has been transferred to it. It must also have the resources to operate, maintain and sustain itself.

This is where the transition becomes particularly difficult.

The Existing Financing Model

AUSSOM has operated within a financing structure that relies heavily on international contributions.

The mission has faced persistent funding shortages, while the transition from ATMIS also left significant financial obligations. AUSSOM inherited approximately **US\$93.9 million in unpaid obligations from ATMIS**, illustrating that the financing challenge predates the current uncertainty surrounding UNSOS.

The European Union has historically been one of the major external contributors to the financing of African-led missions in Somalia, particularly through support for troop allowances. But that support has become less predictable over time.

This leaves Somalia facing a difficult reality:

The country is being asked to assume greater responsibility for its security at precisely the time when the international financing architecture supporting that security is becoming less certain.

The Somali Financing Challenge

For Somalia, assuming security responsibility ultimately means assuming a greater share of the financial burden.

That does not necessarily mean that Somalia must immediately replace every dollar previously provided by international partners.

It does mean that Somalia needs to develop a credible pathway toward domestic security financing.

That requires more than identifying a larger annual allocation.

A sustainable financing model needs to consider:

- the size and structure of the security forces;
- salaries and allowances;
- food and fuel;
- transportation;
- equipment maintenance;
- medical services;
- communications;
- infrastructure;
- training; and
- aviation and other operational requirements.

The challenge is therefore not simply:

How much money does Somalia need?

It is:

What security system can Somalia realistically afford to sustain over the long term?

That is the more important question.

International Support Still Matters

There is also a danger in interpreting security ownership as meaning that international partners should immediately step away.

Somalia's long-term objective should be greater self-reliance. But a successful transition can still involve international support.

The difference is that international assistance should increasingly help Somalia **build sustainable capacity, rather than permanently substitute for it.**

This means that external partners can play an important role in areas such as:

- training and capacity development;
- equipment;
- technical assistance;
- institutional strengthening;
- transitional financing; and
- critical operational support.

The objective should be to make external assistance increasingly complementary to Somali capacity.

The Financing Question Cannot Be Separated from the Transition

This is why the future of UNSOS cannot be considered independently from Somalia's broader security transition.

If the logistical functions currently provided through the UN are reduced, someone else must assume them.

If international troop financing declines, another source must eventually replace it.

If Somali forces assume additional responsibilities, the Somali state must have the resources to sustain those responsibilities.

This creates a simple but consequential principle:

Every responsibility transferred to Somalia carries a financial responsibility with it.

If the responsibility is transferred without the resources required to perform it, the transition becomes nominal rather than substantive.

Kampala's Unfinished Business

The Kampala summit helped create a transition window.

But the financing question remains one of the most important pieces of unfinished business.

The 18–24 months period should therefore be used to develop a financing model that answers, with increasing precision:

- What will Somalia finance?
- What will international partners finance?
- For how long?
- Which responsibilities will move from international support to Somali institutions, and when?
- What resources will be required at each stage?

Without answers to these questions, the transition risks reaching its deadline with the same financial dependency that existed before Kampala.

The ultimate goal should therefore not be to find another temporary funding arrangement every time an existing one expires.

It should be to establish a predictable, sustainable and increasingly Somali-owned financing structure for national security.

That is what would turn the principle of security ownership into something operationally real.

12. THE AFRICAN DIMENSION

The Kampala summit was not only about Somalia.

It was also about the future of African-led security operations and the ability of African institutions to sustain them.

AUSSOM is, at its core, an African Union mission supported by African troop-contributing countries. Its experience therefore raises a broader question:

Can Africa sustain the security responsibilities it undertakes when the financing and logistical systems behind those responsibilities remain heavily dependent on external partners?

This question extends beyond Somalia.

The Burden on Troop-Contributing Countries

African countries provide the personnel that carry much of the operational burden of AUSSOM.

Their soldiers operate in difficult security conditions, often far from their own countries, while their governments must maintain the political and financial commitment required to keep those deployments going.

Yet troop contributions alone do not determine whether an African-led mission can succeed.

The forces also require predictable financing, logistics, equipment and other operational enablers.

This creates an uncomfortable imbalance:

Africa provides much of the personnel, while significant parts of the financial and logistical architecture come from outside Africa.

The experience of AUSSOM therefore illustrates one of the long-standing challenges facing African peace and security operations: the gap between African ownership of the mission and external dependence for the resources required to sustain it.

What This Means for the African Union

For the African Union, the question is larger than the future of one mission.

If African-led operations are expected to take responsibility for major security challenges on the continent, they need financing arrangements that are sufficiently predictable to support those responsibilities.

Otherwise, African institutions may continue to carry the operational burden while remaining vulnerable to decisions made by external donors.

The Kampala discussions therefore have significance for the broader debate about African security ownership.

The issue is not whether external partners should disappear.

International partnerships remain important.

The issue is whether African institutions can increasingly determine, plan and sustain their own security priorities, rather than having the viability of those priorities determined primarily by the availability or withdrawal of external financing.

Kampala as a Regional Signal

The composition of the Kampala summit itself reflects this broader dimension.

Somalia met with the countries contributing troops to AUSSOM, alongside the African Union, regional actors and the United Nations. The summit therefore brought together the principal African and international stakeholders responsible for the mission's future.

The resulting approach was not an immediate abandonment of the African presence.

Instead, the communiqué supported an orderly, coordinated and phased exit, with continued support intended to provide time for the agreed transition milestones to be implemented and Somali security institutions strengthened.

That approach reflects an important principle:

African-led security transitions need African political ownership, but they also need realistic international support during the period in which that ownership is being converted into sustainable national capability.

The Wider Lesson

Somalia's experience offers a broader lesson for African peace and security policy.

An African-led mission should not be judged only by whether African countries provide the troops.

It should also be judged by whether the institutional, financial and logistical arrangements behind those troops are sufficiently sustainable.

If they are not, then the apparent ownership of the operation can conceal a deeper dependency.

The long-term objective should therefore be stronger African capacity at every level:

- African political leadership
- African strategic planning
- African institutional capacity
- African financing where feasible
- and, where international support remains necessary, partnerships that strengthen rather than permanently replace African capacity.

For Somalia, this principle is directly connected to the country's own transition.

For the African Union, it raises a much broader question about the future of African-led peace and security operations.

And for international partners, it raises another:

How can external assistance support African ownership without creating permanent dependence?

That is one of the central lessons emerging from the AUSSOM transition.

13. WHAT KAMPALA STILL LEAVES UNANSWERED

Kampala created an important transition window, but it did not remove the fundamental questions surrounding Somalia's security future.

The summit helped prevent an abrupt disruption to the existing security arrangement and established a framework for continued support while Somali institutions strengthen their capabilities. But the effectiveness of that framework will ultimately depend on decisions that still need to be made.

The most important questions are now practical.

Who Will Finance the Transition?

The 18–24 months period requires resources.

AUSSOM needs financing to remain operational. Somali security institutions need financing as they assume additional responsibilities. And the logistical functions that have historically depended on international support cannot simply disappear.

A sustainable financing framework therefore remains essential.

Who Will Provide the Logistics?

This may be the most immediate operational question.

If UNSOS support is reduced or ends, the functions it currently performs must either be transferred, replaced or financed through another mechanism.

The transition cannot succeed if Somalia receives additional security responsibilities without the logistical capacity to support them.

How Ready Are Somali Security Institutions?

The transition must also be based on actual capability rather than political expectations.

Somalia needs to establish clear benchmarks for force readiness, deployment, command, coordination and operational sustainability.

The important question is not simply whether Somali forces exist.

It is whether they can reliably perform the responsibilities being transferred to them.

What Happens If the Benchmarks Are Not Met?

This question is particularly important.

A transition framework needs both an intended timeline and a mechanism for dealing with delays.

If a critical capability has not been developed by the planned point of transfer, the relevant actors need to know in advance what happens next.

Otherwise, the process risks becoming driven by deadlines rather than conditions.

A transition should be guided by readiness, not simply by the calendar.

What Will Happen to International Support?

International partners also face a strategic choice.

The end goal should be greater Somali ownership, but that does not necessarily mean that all external assistance should end simultaneously.

Some forms of assistance may become more valuable during the transition, particularly support aimed at building Somali institutional and operational capacity.

The question should therefore shift from:

How much external support remains?

to:

What kind of external support produces the greatest increase in Somali capacity?

That is a more useful way of thinking about the transition.

The Central Unanswered Question

All of these questions ultimately lead back to one:

Can Somalia convert the additional time secured in Kampala into sustainable security capacity?

That is the real test.

Kampala provided a diplomatic framework. It provided additional time. It protected the transition from an immediate disruption.

But it did not automatically create the financing, logistics, institutions or capabilities required for Somalia to sustain its security responsibilities.

Those still have to be built.

The period ahead should therefore be treated as a delivery period, not simply an extension of the status quo.

14. SDC'S ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kampala summit should be understood as an important diplomatic achievement, but not as the completion of Somalia's security transition.

Somalia succeeded in securing additional time and in shaping the political outcome of the summit. The agreed 18–24 months window provides an opportunity to strengthen Somali security institutions and prepare for a more sustainable transfer of responsibilities.

But the value of that window will depend on what happens next.

SDC therefore recommends that Somalia and its partners use the transition period around **five priorities**.

1. Turn the Transition Timetable into Measurable Milestones

The 18–24 months period should be accompanied by clear benchmarks.

These should measure actual progress in Somali security capacity rather than simply the passage of time.

The benchmarks should cover:

- force readiness;
- operational responsibility;
- logistics;
- financing;
- institutional coordination.

This would allow all parties to determine whether responsibilities are being transferred at a pace that Somali institutions can realistically sustain.

2. Develop a Clear Replacement for Critical Logistics

The functions currently provided through the international support architecture need to be mapped carefully.

Somalia and its partners should identify which functions will:

- **transfer to Somali institutions;**

- **remain temporarily supported by international partners;**
- **be transferred to another regional or international mechanism; or**
- **require new financing arrangements.**

This should happen before the existing support mechanisms are withdrawn.

The transition should never reach the point where Somalia discovers that a critical capability has disappeared without a replacement.

3. Build a Sustainable Security Financing Model

Somalia should use the transition period to develop a realistic long-term financing framework.

That framework should distinguish between:

- **what Somalia can finance domestically;**
- **what regional partners can contribute; and**
- **what international partners should continue supporting during the transition.**

The objective should be gradual movement toward greater Somali ownership rather than a sudden attempt to replace all external financing.

4. Make International Assistance More Capacity-Focused

International partners should increasingly structure their assistance around building Somali capacity.

Where external support remains necessary, it should help Somalia develop the systems required to eventually operate with less external dependence.

This means placing greater emphasis on:

- institutional development;
- logistics;
- training;
- equipment maintenance;
- planning; and
- sustainable financing.

Success should therefore be measured not simply by the amount of assistance provided, but by **the capacity that assistance helps Somalia build.**

5. Treat the Transition as a Somali State-Building Priority

Security cannot be separated completely from the institutions responsible for governing and financing it.

Somalia therefore needs to treat the transition as a national institutional project rather than simply a military handover.

The objective should be a security system that Somalia can plan, finance, coordinate and sustain over the long term.

The Kampala Window Must Not Be Wasted

The most important recommendation is therefore simple:

Somalia should treat the 18–24 months period secured in Kampala as a deadline for building capability, not as a deadline for waiting.

Every month should produce measurable progress.

Every responsibility scheduled for transfer should have an identified institution, resource requirement and financing pathway.

And every critical capability currently supported externally should have a clear plan for how it will eventually be sustained.

If this happens, Kampala could become a genuine turning point in Somalia's security transition.

If it does not, the same structural questions will simply return when the transition window closes.

15. CONCLUSION: FROM KAMPALA TO SOMALI SECURITY OWNERSHIP

The Kampala summit was an important moment in Somalia's continuing security transition.

Somalia succeeded in securing an additional **18–24 months transition window**, supporting an orderly and phased approach to the eventual departure of AUSSOM. It also demonstrated its ability to assert its position on matters concerning its internal political affairs during the communiqué process.

These are meaningful diplomatic outcomes.

But Kampala should not be understood as the end of the transition.

It is better understood as the beginning of a more demanding phase.

The central challenge facing Somalia is no longer simply maintaining international support. It is using the remaining period of international support to build the capacity required to sustain national security independently.

That requires more than soldiers.

It requires logistics.

It requires predictable financing.

It requires functioning institutions.

It requires coordination.

And it requires the ability to assume responsibility without allowing the withdrawal of external support to create a security vacuum.

The experience of AUSSOM has also demonstrated a wider lesson for Africa.

African countries can provide the troops and political commitment for major security operations, but sustainable African ownership requires more than African personnel. It requires sustainable African institutional, financial and logistical capacity, supported by international partnerships where necessary.

For Somalia, however, the immediate responsibility is clear.

The 18–24 months secured in Kampala should not become another period of dependency.

They should become a period of measurable preparation for ownership.

The country should emerge from this period with stronger security institutions, clearer financing arrangements, greater logistical capacity and a realistic framework for sustaining the responsibilities that AUSSOM currently helps carry.

Ultimately, the success of Kampala will not be determined by the words contained in its communiqué.

It will be determined by what Somalia is capable of doing when the support promised by that communiqué eventually comes to an end.

Kampala bought Somalia time.

The task now is to turn that time into capacity, and that capacity into sustainable security ownership.

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SOURCE NOTE

This publication draws primarily on official documents and statements issued by the African Union and the United Nations, supplemented where appropriate by institutional and academic sources.

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The Somali Diplomacy Centre (SDC) is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan organisation focused on diplomacy and international affairs.

SDC provides a platform for understanding, dialogue and engagement on issues concerning Somalia's diplomacy and international affairs, bringing together relevant people, institutions and ideas.

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